

January 22, 2010

Dear Mayor Marcuccio,

It was good to see you on campus at the Rockville Chamber's Good Morning Rockville last week and to have the opportunity to talk about some of the ways that the City and the College could work together on mutual interests. Following up on our previous discussions, I am writing to provide you with an update regarding our efforts since August to identify options to provide informal access from Princeton Place to the Rockville Campus. The College is proud of its long-standing, positive working relationship with its neighbors, but on this issue, it has been challenging to identify a way to address the competing interests. There are those who want the existing fence between Princeton Place and the Rockville Campus to remain permanently closed, those in favor of controlled or limited access through a gate, and those in favor of returning unrestricted access through Princeton Place.

The City Manager and I have worked together to consider the multiple viewpoints of residents in the neighboring communities and options that might address their interests. Four options have been repeatedly addressed:

1. Relocate the opening to the campus further away from Princeton Place through a fenced walkway. This option received little support.
2. Install a key card controlled access gate. No consensus was reached about the control and distribution of key cards.
3. Establish limited time periods when a gate would be opened. The success of this option depends on the ability of neighbors with different points of view on the fence to agree on hours and to work together collaboratively with one another, the City and the College.
4. Extend the local Ride On route 45 to loop through the Rockville Campus. Although requests were submitted to Ride On by both the City and the College, a positive response appears unlikely at this time; in fact, Ride On is proposing to eliminate service on this route on Saturdays due to budget cuts and low ridership.

Despite lots of effort and good intentions, we have reached a stalemate where the conversations are no longer moving forward. The College believes the time to reopen the dialogue will be when the representatives of the community organizations and the Princeton Place residents can come together on a reasonable alternative option.

Until that time, the College will maintain the fence. While the fence may seem like a recent idea, it had actually been under consideration for a number of years. Both a campus security assessment and the College's master planning process suggested steering pedestrian traffic to the formal entry ways of the campus: two on Mannakee Street and one on Hungerford Drive. These formal entrances are designed and built with proper sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, emergency phones and curb cuts that offer pedestrian safety and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These necessary safety and ADA assets did not exist in the informal access point at Princeton Place. The needs of students, employees and visitors to the Rockville Campus are best served by the three formal campus entrances. Additionally, as the population of the campus has grown, we've been aware of our impact on our neighbors who live the closest to the campus and want to minimize it.

We understand the concern of our neighbors and the City about the proposed cut in Saturday service on the Ride On route 45. As we discussed, we will indicate to Ride On our support of maintaining this service.

Montgomery College looks forward to the continued success of our collaborations with the City such as Rockville Science Day, the F. Scott Fitzgerald Conference, and the Fourth of July Celebration. I hope that we can identify additional partnership opportunities of mutual benefit to the City, the College and our neighbors.

Sincerely,

Judy E. Ackerman, Ph.D.
Vice President and Provost, Rockville Campus

cc: Rockville Council Members
Rockville City Manager
Dr. Christine Borger, Resident Princeton Place (Plymouth Woods)
Ms. Gerry Cashin, President Plymouth Woods
Ms. Elise Gussow, Princeton Place Fence Task Force
Ms. Pauline Jelinek, Resident Princeton Place (College Gardens)
Mr. Mike Phillips, President College Gardens